

Organizational Culture Assessment of a Private School in Nairobi, Kenya.

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of organizational culture at Valley School in Nairobi, Kenya. It aims to improve employee motivation and job satisfaction. The approach involved utilizing Cameron and Quinn's (2011) "Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI)" to evaluate various facets of organizational culture. Studies have shown that research on organizational culture in Kenya has primarily focused on corporate organizations (Ndege & Njoroge, 2022; Chimakati & Macharia, 2024), making this study particularly relevant and timely for educators. The study sample of 12 participants was drawn from 35 staff members, including administrators, teachers, and interns from different departments. The study utilizes Cameron and Quinn's (2011) Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) as a methodological framework for analyzing the organizational culture at Valley School. Findings revealed that the participants identified the predominant current culture as Hierarchical and the preferred culture as Clan. This suggests that the workplace is highly formal and official, emphasizing productivity and stability, necessitating deliberate attention, training, and nurturing to empower and align employees with the organization's desired culture. The school was recommended to embrace a collaborative teamwork approach that promotes shared visions and values. It will empower employees in an environment that streamlines processes and establishes clear roles and responsibilities with regular feedback. The study proposed ways to enhance overall performance and productivity, thereby contributing to developing organizational culture and human resource management. This could lead to a more engaged and productive school community, fostering a sense of hope and motivation.

Introduction

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Building a robust, goal-oriented organizational culture is not just a management axiom but a crucial factor in the success and well-being of the school community, which cannot be overstated in today's globalized, dynamic, and competitive business environment (Emary et al., 2022; Mugo & Namusonge, 2023). Organizations like schools indicate a country's progress amidst global competition, with human capital hinging on its education system (Amtu et al., 2021). When an organization's culture aligns with its strategic objectives, it can significantly improve workers' performance, customer satisfaction, and company results (Auer et al., 2022; Joseph & Kibera, 2019). Research has primarily focused on organizational culture in corporate organizations (Jaganjac et al., 2023; Ndege & Njoroge, 2022; Muchiri & Muathe, 2024; Chimakati & Macharia, 2024), making this study particularly relevant and timely for educators. Collins (2021) argued that organizational culture represents a relatively recent addition to organizational development, and its impact has necessitated the study of organizational culture. Specifically, culture encompasses traditions, values, philosophies, and ethics (Gallagher & Brown, 2007). Most importantly, an organization's culture, which is the focus of this study, plays a pivotal role in determining the success and well-being of the school community (Sabuhari et al., 2020). A positive culture can lead to a more engaged and productive school community, fostering a sense of hope and motivation.

Organizational culture significantly impacts schools, directly impacting education and organizational development (Salimah et al., 2024, p. 100). A strong and positive organizational culture is not a nice to have but a must-have for achieving performance excellence in a globalized, dynamic, and competitive business environment (Kicir & Altunoglu, 2024). Conversely, a toxic or misaligned culture can lead to low motivation, high turnover, and decreased output, hindering our collective ability to educate students and contribute to nation-building. The negative consequences of a toxic culture are severe and urgent, highlighting the need for immediate action.

Leaders, especially in schools, must adapt, innovate, and implement new leadership techniques to tackle emerging challenges quickly, including school culture (Zamroni, 2011, as cited in Rumanti & Aslamiah, 2022, p. 2337). Therefore, this study examines organizational

culture dynamics in a Kenyan private school. This context is particularly relevant and timely for educators, as research in the past has focused on organizational culture in corporate organizations (Jaganjac et al., 2023; Ndege & Njoroge, 2022; Muchiri & Muathe, 2024; Chimakati & Macharia, 2024).

This paper examines the role of organizational culture among the staff of Valley School in Nairobi, Kenya. An organizational diagnosis tool used helped to accomplish the following objectives:

1. To assess the existing and ideal organizational culture at Valley School Nairobi.
2. To examine how the leadership approach of the school influences its organizational culture;
3. To identify the elements that shape the preferred culture and their effects on the school; and
4. To develop strategies that the leaders at Valley School can utilize to foster a positive work environment.

This research examines the organizational culture at Valley School in Nairobi, Kenya, providing valuable insights into African educational settings. The study uses Cameron and Quinn's Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) to analyze how organizational culture impacts employee motivation and job satisfaction. The study discusses how organizational culture impacts staff experiences at Valley School, focusing on its connection to employee motivation and job satisfaction in education. It suggests that school leaders can improve the work environment through effective leadership and identifying key cultural elements to tackle staff performance issues. The research offers insights applicable to similar educational contexts in Africa, particularly in human resource management, and proposes strategies to boost employee engagement, retention, and training. Ultimately, the study aims to foster a supportive culture that benefits staff and enhances students' educational experiences.

Literature Review

Early definitions of organizational culture focused on shared values, beliefs, and norms that shape behavior within an organization (Schein, 1985). Culture was seen as a lens to understanding how organizations functioned and how employees interacted, and definitions expanded to include symbols, rituals, and artifacts (Schein, 1992). The understanding of culture evolved to include its

influence on employee actions, drive, and effectiveness. Subsequent definitions acknowledged organizational culture as an intricate and diverse concept that covers aspects such as teamwork, creativity, and flexibility (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Culture within a company is an ever-evolving, dynamic, and organizational culture improves “organizational performance, knowledge sharing, and innovation” but decreases unwanted cultural practices in corporations (David, 2019; Hartnell et al., 2019; Azeem et al., 2021). Kicir and Altunoglu (2024) added, "Organizational culture acts as the mortar that connects the bricks. Every institution has its unique culture, which has been adopted and shared by all employees over the years” (p.38). Due to the lack of a universal definition of culture that applies to all institutions, researchers have concentrated on categorizing organizational culture into different types and have emphasized situational studies (Kicir & Altunoglu, 2024).

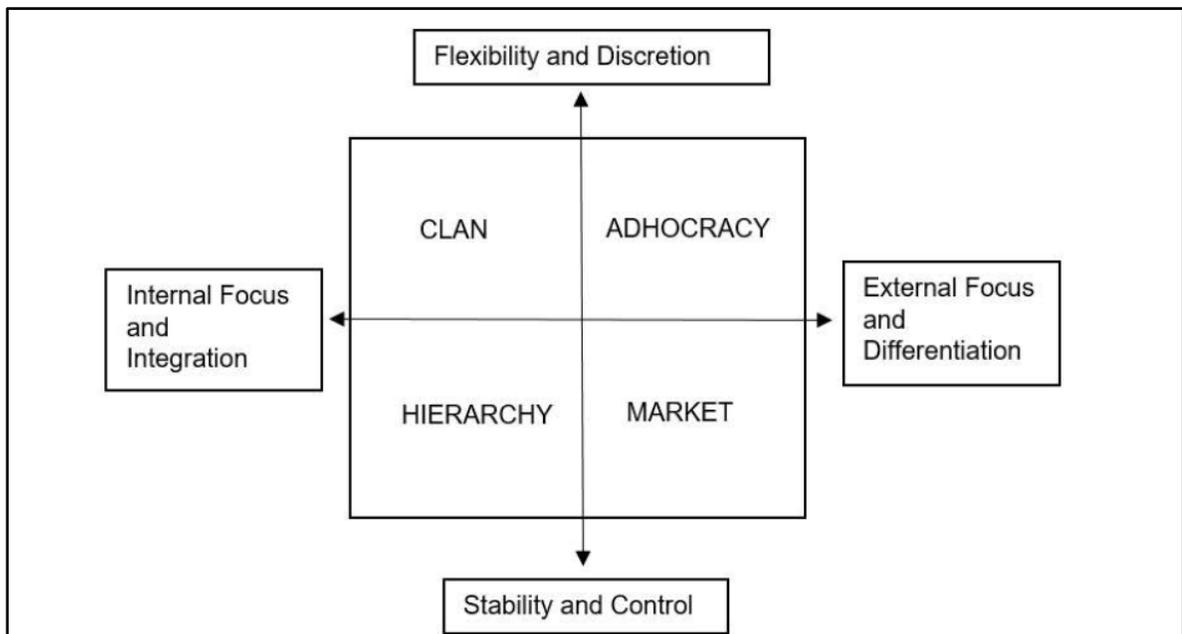
The Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) is a widely used framework developed by Kim Cameron and Robert Quinn in 2011 to assess and understand an organization's culture. It is based on the Competing Values Framework (CVF), which identifies four cultural quadrants: (1) Clan Culture – a collaborative, family-like atmosphere emphasizing employee involvement and participation. (2) Adhocracy Culture– innovative, entrepreneurial environment, emphasizing creativity and risk-taking. (3) Market Culture – competitive, results-driven culture emphasizing efficiency and productivity. (4) Hierarchy Culture – structured, bureaucratic organization emphasizing stability and control.

The Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) is a comprehensive tool designed to evaluate an organization's culture through a structured survey of 24 items. These items are systematically divided into six distinct categories, each focusing on a critical aspect of organizational dynamics: (1) Dominant Characteristics - this category explores the prevailing traits and behaviors that define the organization's identity. (2) Organizational Leadership – this section focuses on the leadership style that guides the organization. (3) Management of Employees – this category examines the approaches used in managing employees, including how they are motivated, developed, and recognized. (4) Organizational Glue – this aspect identifies what binds the organization, such as values, traditions, or informal networks. (5) Strategic Emphasis - this category analyzes the strategic priorities and focus areas that drive the organization forward. (6) Criteria of Success – this section examines how the organization defines and measures success. The OCAI is adaptable for organizational leaders to understand employee motivation and job satisfaction

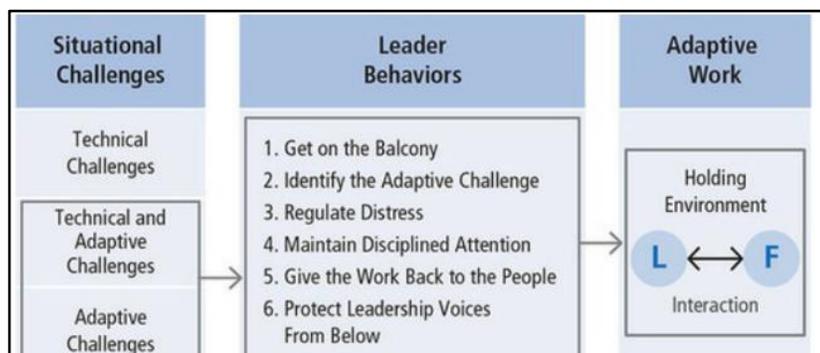
(Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Sabuhari et al., 2020).

Adaptive leadership entails inspiring individuals to confront and address issues, obstacles, and changes (Northouse, 2019, p. 392). It emphasizes the adjustments leaders need to make in response to evolving circumstances. It mobilizes people to address challenges and encourages individuals to adapt and embrace new approaches to deal with challenges and flourish (Heifetz et al., 2009; Heifetz & Linsky, 2017). It includes developing, articulating, and executing responsive strategies and is particularly useful during crises when quick and effective decision-making is essential (Goode et al., 2021).

Figure 1.1: The Competing Values Framework (Source: Cameron and Quinn, 2016: 35)



Northouse (2019) argued that adaptive leaders guide their efforts toward achieving adaptive work, focusing on communication processes between leaders and followers. This work mainly involves followers, who ideally operate within a supportive environment that allows for addressing potential changes in responsibilities, priorities, and beliefs. The model divides organizational improvement efforts into technical problems and adaptive challenges (Fig. 1.1). Some challenges are mainly technical. In contrast, others have both a technical and adaptive aspect, and some are primarily adaptive. Northouse's model prescribes six leadership behaviors to confront challenges.



The adaptive leadership model's strengths are that it is prescriptive, flexible, and follower-centered and creates a holding environment where followers can discuss complex issues (Northouse, 2019, pp. 412 - 413). The criticism is that the concept still needs refinement because there is little empirical research and more conceptualization (Northouse, 2019, p. 414).

Adaptive leadership fosters a culture of experimentation, collaboration, and adaptability, promoting learning, empowerment, and diversity. This approach creates a resilient and innovative environment for navigating complexity (Heifetz et al., 2009; Higgs, 2009). The COVID-19 pandemic (2019-2021) highlighted the importance of adaptive leadership in times of uncertainty. Influential leaders exhibit traits such as adaptability, decisive action, a commitment to economic stability, a focus on mission objectives, and attention to diverse stakeholder needs (Crane, 2022; Endzinaitė, 2024). Oduol (2021) noted that the pandemic significantly impacted the education sector, leading schools in Kenya and beyond to adopt innovative strategies for effective teaching and learning. Therefore, organizational culture influences adaptability and emphasizes the need for cultural transformation to enhance agility (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Schein, 2010).

The Adaptive Leadership model and the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) are connected through their shared focus on organizational adaptability, effectiveness, and cultural transformation. It emphasizes the importance of flexibility in responding to changing environments (Heifetz et al., 2010). It involves transforming organizational culture to address complex challenges (Endzinaitė, 2024). OCAI's competing values framework assesses an organization's cultural flexibility, aligning with adaptive leadership principles (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Monira et al., 2024). OCAI assists in recognizing cultural strengths and weaknesses, guiding adaptive leadership strategies, and offering a framework for assessing and transforming organizational culture while supporting adaptive leadership efforts (Gul et al., 2024).

Using a diagnostic tool like OCAI to identify dominant cultural characteristics, adaptive leaders can implement strategies and cultivate a work environment that reflects the characteristics of a Clan culture, characterized by collaboration, community engagement, and strong interpersonal relationships, while also meeting the essential need for stability and structure inherent in a hierarchical culture (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). This balanced approach is vital in creating an atmosphere where staff and students can thrive in common organizational values, norms, and behaviors (Schein, 2010).

Heifetz et al. (2010) comprehensively examined the relationship between adaptive leadership

and organizational culture. Their research underscored the critical role that cultural flexibility plays in enabling organizations to respond effectively to changing environments. The study highlighted how leaders who embrace adaptive strategies can foster a culture that promotes innovation, resilience, and responsiveness, ultimately leading to improved organizational performance.

Recent studies have indicated that an organization's culture influences how it functions and treats its customers and employees, aligning with shareholders' expectations (Sikilia & Miroga, 2018; Mugo & Namusonge, 2023). The implication for leading organizations experiencing culture change is that leaders can adapt. This explains why adaptive leadership is appropriate for understanding the role of organizational culture in schools, which may have experienced the attribution of staff and students, recruitment of new employees, or application of a new curriculum.

Balková and Jambal's (2023) study used the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) to assess Czech companies' existing and preferred organizational cultures and their relationship with organizational size. Data was collected from 962 companies between 2019 and 2021 and analyzed using various statistical methods, such as Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS 24. The results revealed that clan culture is the most prevalent in the Czech Republic, followed by hierarchical, market, and adhocratic cultures. The current distribution was (1) clan (31.72%), (2) hierarchical (25.46%), (3) market (21.5%), and (4) adhocratic (21.28%). In terms of desired culture, the order changed to (1) clan (35.3%), (2) hierarchical (22.91%), (3) adhocratic (22.63%), and (4) market (19.17%). A significant difference was found in cultural perceptions based on organizational size. A noted limitation was the unequal number of respondents in 2020 and 2021, affecting time-based comparisons. This study can be a reference for comparing organizational cultures across different nations.

Ibardaloza (2023) conducted empirical research on the relationship between adaptive leadership behavior and organizational effectiveness in higher education institutions in Catanduanes, Philippines, involving 235 respondents (21 leaders and 214 faculty members). The study used a concurrent mixed-methods approach with surveys and interviews. Key findings revealed that educational leaders exhibited high adaptive leadership behaviors, with institutions showing high organizational effectiveness. A significant relationship was identified between organizational effectiveness and adaptive leadership behavior, except in "strategy" and "skills and competencies." Challenges like ineffective leadership and management systems were identified as hindering factors, while solid leadership qualities and effective communication were noted as facilitating factors. The

study confirmed a strong association between the two concepts in higher education settings.

Both models (adaptive leadership and OCAI) highlight the importance of assessing and potentially transforming organizational culture to improve effectiveness. Adaptive leaders can leverage insights from the OCAI to guide cultural change initiatives, focusing on engaging employees in the transition to achieve desired outcomes. In summary, the Adaptive Leadership model can inform leaders on how to navigate and help shape organizational culture as identified by the OCAI, enhancing the organization's effectiveness and responsiveness in a changing environment (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Kotter, 2014).

Methodology

This study uses a quantitative research design to conduct an organizational diagnosis of the Valley School in Nairobi, Kenya. The sample population included all 35 staff members, comprising administrators, teachers, and interns from various departments. The sample of 12 staff was selected from the population, aiming to capture the perspectives of the entire school community (Creswell, 2014). Data collection involved surveys using the OCAI instrument to gather information on the school's culture, leadership, communication, and overall effectiveness. The surveyed data was analyzed using a guided approach to an online OCAI analysis spreadsheet (Excel-universe, n.d.). The integrated findings provided a comprehensive understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, guiding informed decision-making and strategic planning.

Cameron and Quinn (2011) developed a model of four different organizational culture types: clan, adhocracy, market, and hierarchy cultures. They argued that an organization may have a dominant and a secondary culture and evolve or transition between cultures over time. The authors developed a tool widely used for assessing and understanding organizational culture, the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) (Cameron & Quinn, 2011, p. 35).

According to Cameron and Quinn (2011), the “Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI)” table is used to assess and measure different aspects of organizational culture. The table is divided into two main sections: internal and external, each with four categories. The internal section comprises Clan, Adhocracy, Market, and Hierarchy, representing different organizational cultures. Clan culture focuses on flexibility and a family-like environment, while Adhocracy culture values innovation and risk-taking. Market culture is characterized by competitiveness and achievement, and Hierarchy culture emphasizes stability and formalized

procedures. This assessment helps organizations identify gaps between their current and desired culture by understanding their current cultural position and developing strategies for their desired culture. In the next section is a table showing distribution trends of the current and desired culture according to its participants from the school.

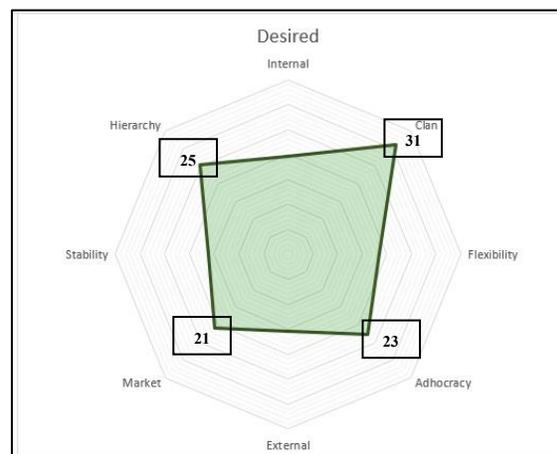
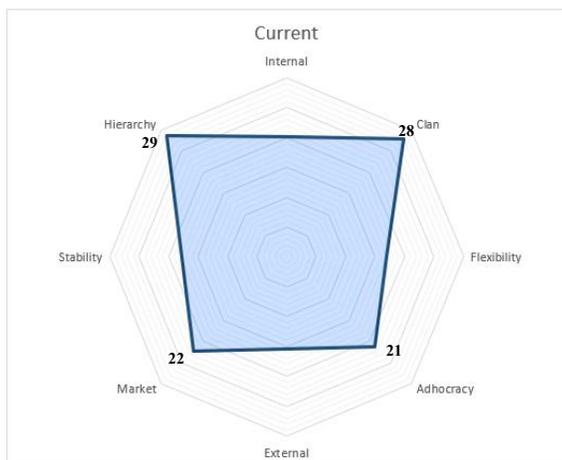
Research Findings

This research focused on Valley School in Nairobi. This section presents the research findings from the study. The table's current and desired values assess the current and preferred organizational culture. Table 1.0 shows a comparison between the current state and desired state of certain organizational aspects. It includes factors like "Internal Clan," "Flexibility," "Adhocracy," "External Market," "Stability," and "Hierarchy" (Cameron & Quinn, 2011, p. 75). The numbers under current and desired represent the assessment of these factors from data received. The numbers represent different aspects, and the desired column indicates the target values for each factor.

Tab. 1.0: The current and desired culture of Valley School

	Internal	Clan	Flexibility	Adhocracy	External	Market	Stability	Hierarchy
Current	20	28	17	21	15	22	18	29
Desire	20	31	19	23	15	21	16	25

Figure 1.2 shows that the school employees rated the dominant current culture as Hierarchical on a scale of 29. This means the workplace is highly formal and official, emphasizing productivity and stability. Success is defined by reliable delivery, seamless scheduling, and cost efficiency, with a focus on employee security and predictability (Cameron & Quinn, 2011).



The graph (Figure 1.3) illustrating the current and desired cultures at Valley School visualizes the significant disparity between the existing organizational culture and the preferred culture among employees. The dominant culture is categorized as Hierarchical, scoring 29. This indicates a structured and formal environment where productivity, stability, and adherence to established processes are prioritized. Such a culture efficiently ensures consistency and reliability but may stifle creativity, innovation, and employee engagement.

In contrast, the desired culture (Figure 1.4) is identified as Clan, scoring 31. This reflects a strong preference among employees for a more inclusive, friendly, and collaborative atmosphere. A Clan culture promotes teamwork, open communication, and a sense of belonging, which can lead to higher job satisfaction, loyalty, and overall employee well-being.

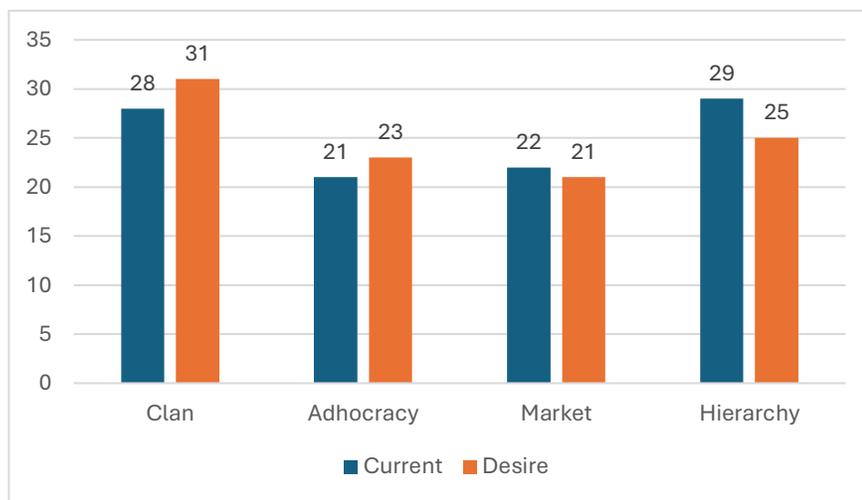


Figure 1.5: Current and Desired Culture

The graph (Figure 1.5) depicts the existing and desired cultural dynamics at Valley School using the competing values framework. Hierarchical culture has a score of 29, and the goal is to transition to a Clan culture, scoring 31, which reflects a preference for a collaborative and supportive atmosphere that improves job satisfaction and loyalty. The gap between the current Hierarchical culture and the desired Clan culture signifies a critical need for a strategic shift in organizational culture. Employees are looking for an environment that fosters flexibility, collaboration, and personal connections rather than one focused solely on efficiency and traditional structures. Market culture

elements suggest that while employees value a supportive atmosphere, they are also conscious of the competitive educational landscape in Nairobi. Balancing productivity with a collaborative culture will be essential for Valley School's success and adaptability. The graph highlights the need for Valley School to enhance its efforts in transforming the organizational culture from a rigid hierarchy to a more dynamic and supportive Clan environment, which could significantly improve employee engagement and satisfaction.

Discussion of Findings

The findings reveal a significant disparity between the current and desired organizational cultures at Valley School. The current culture, characterized as Hierarchical with a score of 29, indicates a structured environment with a clear focus on productivity, stability, and adherence to established processes. This hierarchical approach often promotes efficiency but can limit innovation and employee engagement. The desire for a Clan culture, with a score of 31, suggests that employees seek a more inclusive, friendly, and collaborative setting. This shift underscores the importance of fostering relationships and support among colleagues, which can lead to increased loyalty and job satisfaction.

Analyzing the various cultural dimensions, internal Clan, Flexibility, Adhocracy, External Market, Stability, and Hierarchy—shows that employees value flexibility and clan dynamics more than the current emphasis on hierarchy and stability. The scores in the desired column indicate a preference for greater adaptability and innovation within the educational environment. These findings point to a need for leadership to recognize the changing values among staff and to facilitate a transition that accommodates increased flexibility and innovative practices in teaching and administrative approaches.

The preference for a Clan culture highlights the need for a supportive community among staff members (Tab. 1.0). Employees desire a workplace where they can express themselves and engage in meaningful relationships. Such an environment enhances teamwork and encourages employee motivation and commitment. Leaders are seen as role models in a clan setting, and prioritizing their role in nurturing this culture will be essential for achieving the desired organizational values. Implementing mentorship programs and team-building activities may be beneficial in cultivating this environment.

While the data reflects a dominant hierarchical culture, it is essential to recognize its

relevance in maintaining order and structure within an educational institution. However, the findings indicate a greater need for Clan culture, which is often more effective in fostering creativity and collaboration. Organizations must strive to balance maintaining a necessary level of hierarchy and encouraging innovation and risk-taking. The school leadership should explore ways to empower staff by providing opportunities to share ideas and participate in decision-making processes, thereby blending these cultural dimensions.

The competitive landscape of the educational sector in Nairobi introduces external pressures that influence organizational culture. Market culture in the assessment indicates a recognition of the need for productivity and competitiveness in an increasingly challenging environment. This finding suggests that while educational institutions must emphasize innovation and a supportive culture, they must also remain aware of market dynamics. Strategic planning that aligns educational goals with market demands will be essential for sustaining the organization's success.

In summary, these findings provide a comprehensive view of the current and desired organizational culture at Valley School, emphasizing the need for change toward a more collaborative and innovative environment. The results target essential areas for development, guiding the school toward a culture that enhances employee satisfaction and educational effectiveness.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Adaptive school leaders can pinpoint specific areas that require attention and adjustment by analyzing the disparities between the organization's current and desired culture profiles. This analysis enables leaders to identify which cultural aspects to amplify, modify, or maintain at their current level. As illustrated in Figure 1.5, the organization's culture profile reveals a need to emphasize the clan and hierarchy quadrants, which suggests fostering a more collaborative and structured work environment. Conversely, the organization aims to de-emphasize the adhocracy and market quadrants, indicating a shift away from a purely innovative and competitive focus. Notably, the current culture profile highlights a significant deficiency in the clan culture type that requires deliberate attention, training, and cultivation to empower employees and align with the organization's desired culture. Below are some suggested ways to implement the following recommendations:

- i) The school of leadership should encourage cross-functional teams and committees at the workplace and implement team-building activities and social events (Klaic et

al., 2020). Such events will recognize and reward staff team achievements. Gopinath et al. (2021) suggested that one way to improve is to recognize and reward staff team achievements with incentives and encourage committee participation, thereby improving employee motivation.

- ii) Employees should craft and lavishly communicate a shared vision and values statement to align policies and practices (Lubis & Hanum, 2020).
- iii) The school should provide regular training and development opportunities to enhance the teachers' skills. For example, delegate decision-making authority to appropriate levels involving teachers demonstrating a commitment to the organization because indecision affects organizational performance (Motloun & Lew, 2023).
- iv) Streamlining processes and reducing bureaucracy by implementing flexible work arrangements because a study by Hulu and Baene (2024) shows that there "is a deep understanding of how work-life balance and flexible work arrangements affect employee performance is crucial for organizational survival and success" (p. 162). This will encourage innovation and experimentation.
- v) Establish the secondary hierarchy culture. It is recommended that the leadership establish clear roles and responsibilities, clearly defined job descriptions and expectations, organizational structure, chain of command, accountability, and regular feedback (Schepers & Van der Borgh, 2020; Rogers, 2022).
- vi) Implementing a training program to enhance staff skills and knowledge can significantly improve organizational performance and productivity (Febrian & Solihin, 2024). Researchers have suggested that the enhancement of organizational culture is influenced by the training and development of staff (Panjaitan et al., 2023; Dante Manuel et al., 2023).

By effectively implementing the proposed strategies, Valley School leaders can develop a work environment that embodies the qualities of a Clan culture, marked by collaboration and strong relationships, while fulfilling the essential need for stability and structure in a hierarchical culture. These strategies include promoting open communication among staff, organizing team-building exercises, and establishing mentorship programs to strengthen professional connections. Additionally, creating well-defined roles and responsibilities and transparent processes can ensure

the stability and organization that a hierarchical framework requires. As methods are integrated, the school leaders can enhance their workforce's skills and knowledge, fostering a more capable and motivated team. This supportive atmosphere will likely improve overall performance and productivity, benefiting student outcomes and the larger educational community. In essence, finding a balance between the collaborative spirit of a Clan culture and the structural stability of hierarchy can bring considerable advantages for staff and students.

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